



Embassy of the United States of America
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Public Affairs Section

Remarks for the U.S. Independence Day Program
BY US Ambassador Marcia Bernicat
Tuesday, July 3, 2018
6:30 p.m.
Atrium, Chancery

His Excellency Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, M.P., Honorable Foreign Minister;
Dr. Tess Caswell, Planetary Scientist and Flight Controller;
Dignitaries, friends and colleagues:
Assalam-u-Alaikum, Nomoshkar, Shubho Shondha.

Welcome to the U.S. Embassy and happy early 4th of July! Tomorrow, Americans all over the world will celebrate this holiday with family and friends. As many of you know, this is my last Independence Day celebration as the U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh. I could not be more grateful to have all of you here to help us commemorate the 242nd anniversary of the United States of America's independence.

Our national day is not just the anniversary of the birth of our nation. It is a reminder of the enduring truth that a people can design their own future, a truth that drives us to constantly seek to ensure the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all our citizens. The 4th of July is evidence that a grand experiment—an experiment in self-governance, in democracy, in the unwavering pursuit of liberty—can shape the world. That experiment is alive and well today as we continue to do what our founders declared, “to form a more perfect union.”

As I hope you can tell from the décor, for this year's celebration we chose to highlight one of our grandest, yet most humbling, achievements: our journey into space and NASA's 60th anniversary.

What was once a race between the United States and the Soviet Union, the embodiment of an intractable conflict, has redefined nearly every aspect of our lives. Our desire to reach and explore outer space has inspired and propelled our drive to discover new technologies. Those technologies have improved countless lives in every corner of the world. From camera phones

and athletic shoes to portable water purification devices and lifesaving nutrient-rich baby formula—these inventions are a direct result of our space programs. And today, space exploration and research has become a unique—albeit unexpected—cornerstone of diplomacy.

This year the world watched as Bangladesh, with the support of NASA and SpaceX, launched Bangabandhu One—opening a new chapter in Bangladesh’s rapid acceleration toward becoming a middle-income country. The Bangabandhu One satellite is a true testament to the remarkable will and innovation of the Bangladeshi people.

I believe it is this will, this ambition for growth and progress that unites Americans and Bangladeshis. Enshrined in both our constitutions is the notion that all people are created equal and, when given the opportunity and freedom to think, invent, and express themselves, the potential is limitless.

Later this year, both our countries will put these values to the test. Both of our countries will ask our citizens to head to the ballot box in the truest expression of self-governance.

So as I conclude my time here in Bangladesh, I ask the government of Bangladesh and the people of Bangladesh for the same thing I ask of my own government and my own people: Amader shomorthon korte hobe ohingsho, obadh, o bishash joggo nirbachon ja kina jonogoner icchar protifolon. [support non-violent, free, fair, and credible elections that reflect the will of the people.]

Bangladeshi jonogoner proggya ebong prottoy darai ekti shadhin, dhormo nirokekho o gonotantiric rashtre jonmo shombhob hoye chilo. [The wisdom and determination of the Bangladeshi people created an independent, secular, and democratic nation.] Shatchollish bochor por shei eki proggya aar prottoy ekhon moha akashe Bangabandhu satellite sthapon shombhob koreche. [47 years later the same wisdom and determination launched the Bangabandhu satellite into space.]

Ami bishash kori shei eki proggya o protiti bhobishot projonmer jonno Sonar Banglar shawpno puron korbe. [I believe the same wisdom and determination will fulfill the dream of a Sonar Bangla for future generations.]

While I’ll be sad to leave Bangladesh, I already know I will return. When I come back to visit, I expect to see a dramatically different country. A more advanced and developed Bangladesh. But a Bangladesh with the same determination and passion for liberty that has endured since 1971.

Before he died on the 50th anniversary of our independence, Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, anticipated our celebration today, writing, “For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.”

Today I am happy to recall and to celebrate with you these rights and founding principles that have endured for 242 years—these universal rights and principles that, in many ways, connect our two countries and serve the common welfare of our citizens and the world.

Thank you and for celebrating our Independence Day with us!

Onek Dhonnobad!

Abar dekkha hobe!

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GR/2018